

# **FAMILY INTERACTION: THE EXPRESSWAY TO PERMANENCY - FACILITATING SUCCESSFUL VISITATION**



- *Prepared by:*
- *Norma M. Ginther, M.S.W.,  
L.I.S.W.*
- *Jeffrey D. Ginther, JD*

# WELCOME



- Why do you see your family?
  - What do you need?

# Family Interaction Resources

Hess, P. & Proch, K. (1988). *Family visiting in out-of-home care: A guide to practice.*

Pine, B., Warsh, R., & Maluccio, A. (eds.) (1933). *Together again: Family reunification in foster care.*

National Resource Center for Foster Care & Permanency Planning (2003), in the article *Visiting Between Children in Care and Their Families: A look at Current policy.*

C.H. Neuman (1997).

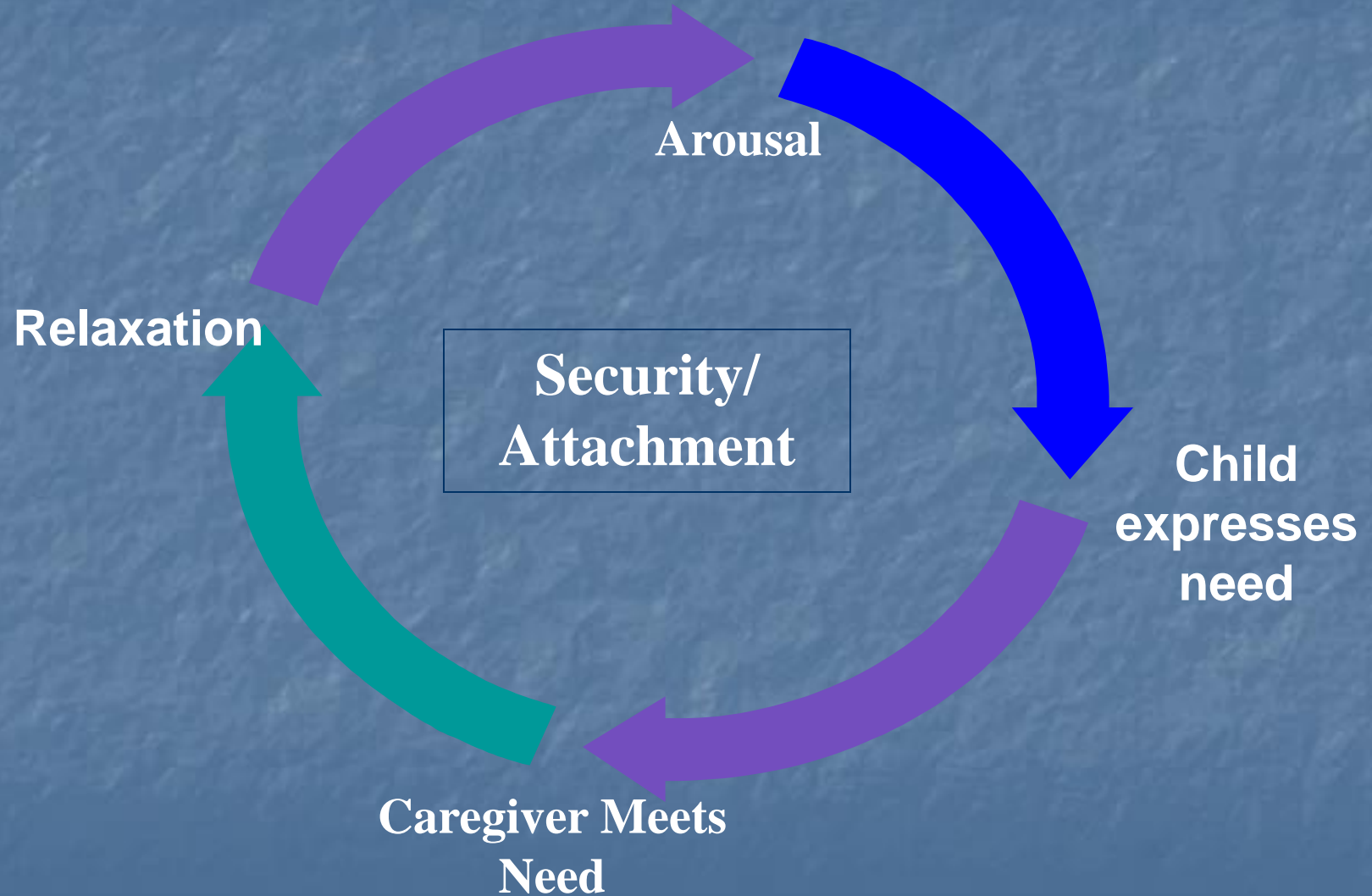
# FAMILY INTERACTION

- Without family interaction parent/child relationship deteriorates
- Loss greatest emotional trauma
- Reduces negative affects
- Reduces fantasies/fears
- Reduces self-blame
- Immediate, regular, and increased
- Length? – age/need for protection
- Least restrictive
- Minimum – multiple times per week





# The Importance of Attachment: 0-3



# Crisis Theory

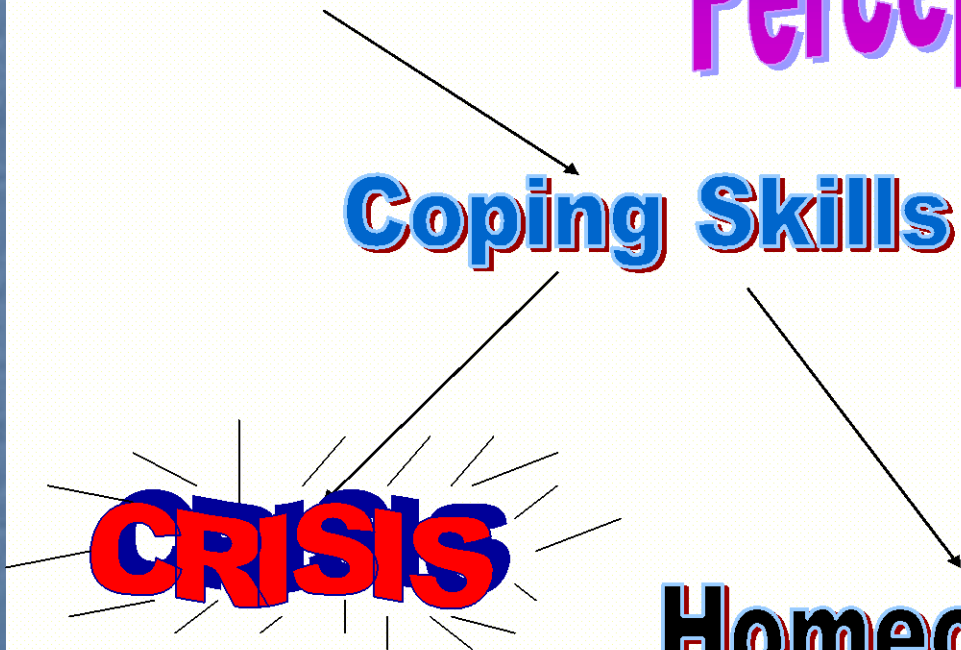
**Stressors**

**Perception of Event**

**Coping Skills**

**CRISIS**

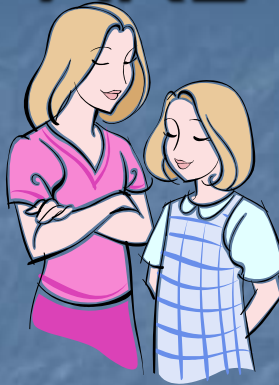
**Homeostasis**



# Optimizing Family Interaction

- Surest way to assess strengths/needs
- Teaching tool for caseworkers to model
- Minimize risk.
- Never do anything for a child, a parent can do.
- Evaluate why children or parents withdraw.
- Keep and encourage family traditions.
- Make life books.
- Caseworkers must assess their commitment level and why it's there.
- Specifically recruit foster parents to work with birth parents.

# SIBLINGS ARE IMPORTANT



- Place together or in close proximity
- Use sibling placement contracts.
- Assist foster parent with parentified sibling.
- Don't strip the role of the parentified sibling.



# ASSUMPTIONS

1. Agency assures well-planned family interaction.
2. Family interaction is not a reward or punishment.
3. All planning should involve all members of the Primary Care Team.

# Basic Elements of Family Interaction Plan

- Frequency
- Length of time
- Location
- Supervision
- Participants
- Support Services
- Activities
- Case identification information
- Reasons for child being in care, risk to the child, ways to protect child if child needs to be protected.




# **Roles and Responsibilities Regarding Family Interaction**

# **Caseworkers' Role/Responsibility**

- **Develop, implement and revise plan.**
- **Prioritize facilitation of plan.**
- **Support the parent, foster family and child.**
- **Inform parent of their responsibilities.**
- **Assess family attachment and extended family connection.**
- **Evaluate success of plan.**
- **Supervise Family Interaction, if needed.**
- **Work with child and parent over setbacks in plan.**
- **Provide conflict resolution to the plan.**
- **Stress to all that safety is sole responsibility of parent.**



# Parents' Role/Responsibility

- Insure emotional and physical safety and well-being of child.
- Provide or support transportation, whenever possible.
- Attend Family Interaction  as scheduled.
- Call in advance to cancel and discuss cancellation with child.
- Take on parental role to meet child's needs.
- Respond to direction during visits.
- Follow agreed-to rules and conditions.





# Foster Families' Role/Responsibility



- Assist or provide transportation of child.
- Have regular on-going contact with parent.
- Permit Family Interaction in foster homes.
- Active in arranging Family Interaction.
- Document behavior before, during, and after.
- Encourage contact and support child.
- Have child ready to participate.
- Pack clothing and other essentials for overnight.
- Help child accept separation from parent – life book opportunities.
- Notify caseworker of any unplanned activity that occurs.

# CONTACT MUST BE CHILD SPECIFIC



- Child's ability to self-care
- Family's willingness/ability to get help
- Child's request for and reaction to visits
- Divided loyalty/chaos at home
- Developmentally appropriate activities
- Therapeutic needs of child
- Consider child's schedule

# Special Conditions Affecting the Parent

- Drug or alcohol addiction
- Incarceration
- Parental non-compliance with Family Interaction
- Issues of foster parents
  - \* Extra supports to assist parent
  - \* Putting aside biases





# Why a partnership?

- I. Benefits

- II. Liabilities



- III. Helping the child while helping the family